

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

51
M5:
May 12, 1960
TAM Workshop
cop. 2

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service
Washington, D. C.

ORGANIZATION AND LEVELS OF AUTHORITY

Notes for Talk by W. A. Minor, Assistant Administrator,
Management, Foreign Agricultural Service, U. S.
Department of Agriculture, at the TAM Workshop,
Atlantic City, New Jersey, May 12, 1960.

The establishment of organization and the delegation of authority and responsibility are essential parts of Management. Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and facilitating the work of people to achieve desired goals. It may also be defined as the skillful use of means to accomplish a purpose. These must all be considered in setting up an organization and assigning responsibility. Let us look at some of the requirements for effective operation.

Requirements for Effective Operation

1. Sound policies based on need and including adequate authorization.
2. Competent leadership at all levels.
3. Good planning. This involves determining the objectives of the administrative effort and devising means to achieve them.
4. Efficient organization. Organize means "to bring into systematic relation as parts of a whole." The objective of the organization as well as other actions taken, is to render maximum service at least cost consistent with good administration. The organization should:
 - (a) be based on the job to be done;
 - (b) be flexible enough to meet changes;

Changes are inevitable.

"Today is not yesterday--we ourselves change. How then can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be fittest, continue always the same: - Change indeed is painful, yet ever needful."

---Carlyle

- (c) consider the available leadership and personnel;

Organization deals with people as well as with structure.

- (d) assign fields of responsibility as clearly as possible.

5. Delegation of responsibility.

- (a) first consideration to get the job done;
- (b) lines of responsibility should be clear;
- (c) man responsible must be able to act promptly within broad policies;
- (d) it is the responsibility of the individual to keep the person he is responsible to advised of developments, especially serious problems to be met.

6. Adequate communication:

Between leaders and employees and from one organizational unit to another.

7. Coordination.

- (a) it is necessary to provide for coordination:

- of activities within a program;
- between agricultural programs;
- with other programs.

- (b) methods of coordination:

- policy officials;
- staff assistants;
- staff offices;
- staff meetings;
- committees;
- personal contacts;
- housing arrangements.

8. Review of programs: - Continued and periodic.

- legislative;
- administrative;
- internal.

I shall comment more fully on several of these items that have a direct bearing on our subject.

Principles of Organization

The Army Service Forces of the United States have developed a list of practical principles of organization which will help to guide us in our discussion.

"Principle No. 1 'Every necessary function involved in the mission and objectives of the organization is assigned to a unit of that organization.'

"Principle No. 2 'The responsibilities assigned to the unit of an organization are specifically clear-cut and understood.'

"Principle No. 3 'No function is assigned to more than one independent unit of an organization. Overlapping responsibility will cause confusion and delay.'

"Principle No. 4 'Consistent methods of organizational structure should be applied at each level of the organization.'

"Principle No. 5 'Each member of the organization from top to bottom knows - (a) To whom he reports. (b) Who reports to him.'

"Principle No. 6 'No member of an organization reports to more than one supervisor.'

"Principle No. 7 'Responsibility for a function is matched by the authority necessary to perform that function.'

"Principle No. 8 'Independent individuals or units reporting directly to a supervisor do not exceed the number which can be feasibly and effectively coordinated and directed.'

"Principle No. 9 'Channels of command are not violated by staff units.'

"Principle No. 10 'Authority and responsibility for action is decentralized to the units and individuals responsible for actual performance of operations to the greatest extent possible, so long as such decentralization does not hamper necessary control over policy or the standardization of procedures.'

"Principle No. 11 'Commanding officers should exercise control through attention to policy problems of exceptional importance rather than through review of routine actions of subordinates.'

"Principle No. 12 'Organization should never be permitted to grow so elaborate as to hinder work accomplishment."

Types of Organization

Organization may be based on:

1. Major process:

legal matters, statistics,

Tends to emphasize technical skills.

2. Major purpose or function:

research, marketing, loans.

Centers attention on end results:

3. Persons or groups to be served:

housewives, farmers, warehousemen, processors, etc..

4. Geographic areas:

service to a definite area.

5. Product or commodity:

cotton, grain, livestock, etc..

The type of organization may be changed based on emphasis at a particular time.

John D. Millett says: "If there is any clear, convincing, 'best' solution to organization structure, the author does not know 'what it is.'"

Participation of Leaders in Organization

In defining functions and responsibilities it is important to arrange for participation of leaders in the organization so that they will be familiar with the decisions made and the reasons for them. They should participate insofar as possible in developing functional statements as a

basis for organizational units and delineating their functions. Similarly, they should participate in determining the responsibilities of individuals as set forth in job descriptions and delegations of authority.

Responsibility

I note particularly that the subject assigned to me is organization and "levels of authority." If I were to issue a dictionary, I believe I would leave out the word "authority," but would put the word "responsibility" in large, black letters.

According to the dictionary "authority" is "the right to control, command or determine and enforce obedience" or "authority is a power or right to direct the action of others--usually because of rank or office--to issue commands and to punish for violations." It is associated with the words peremptory and dictatorial.

Responsibility is to do things "on one's own initiative or responsibility;" "answerable or accountable as for something within one's power, or management." Implication of "trust" and "duty."

The ideal concept would be whenever two or more men band themselves together to conduct an enterprise, they agree among themselves as to how responsibilities are to be divided. Lack of clear understanding as to what each is to do results in poor administration. Objectives are accomplished through people by the assignment of responsibility. A person is not responsible unless the power to accomplish is also given to him. In other words a person is not responsible without the necessary authority. When a leader delegates responsibility to a subordinate, he multiplies his energy and capacity and serves to define the function of his subordinates.

Decentralization

Decentralization places the responsibility of making decisions at points as near as possible to where actions take place. With proper recognition as to overall policies, this is likely to get best overall results by bringing the greatest and most directly applicable knowledge and most timely understanding into the greatest number of decisions. Decentralization will not work if a large number of decisions have to be "checked" first. The individual to whom the responsibility is given must also have the right to make the decision and know that he will receive support in most cases.

The extent to which responsibility should be decentralized should take into account the capacity of the individual to whom the responsibility is given to make proper decisions and to bring to the attention of those above him instances which may have importance which are more far-reaching than his area of responsibility or which may result in serious problems. Decentralization can be achieved only when the executive realizes that he cannot delegate a responsibility and at the same time, in fact, retain the responsibility himself.

Many of us want decentralization to the maximum above us and centralization, in large part, below our level in the organization.

An operating official who can delegate proper responsibility through a good organization multiplies the effectiveness of his own efforts many times over. A person who cannot delegate under proper circumstances should expect to be limited in his accomplishments and progress in the organization.

Change

It is essential in good administration to be willing to change and take the lead in recommending or putting into effect needed changes. Change is not easy and there is a great inclination to postpone it until we are in the position of the noblemen when Lady Macbeth said to them, "Stand not upon

the order of your going, but go at once."

Nearly 500 years ago Machiavelli in "The Prince" said, "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain of success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things." Change for the sake of change is wasteful. To delay change until it is forced upon us usually results in major reorganizations which at best are expensive in terms of manpower, disruption of activities, and lowered production during periods of readjustment. It is desirable to make changes as conditions warrant and thereby create as few upsets as possible to get the job done. The importance of looking ahead to see changes which are needed to meet the changing responsibilities before being overwhelmed by them cannot be overemphasized.

There is always resistance to change and everyone is for reorganization of the other fellow's agency. We are too often by our own organization as we are with men. We like a man who comes right out and says what he thinks when he agrees with us.

It is sometimes necessary to reorganize to get a new program underway, to break down resistance to change, or old biases, or blocks which would delay the new activity. This also may involve new leadership. The good administrator will keep abreast of the changing need, make changes as they are required, work as fully as possible with those concerned in making the changes and thereby utilize their knowledge and enlist their support.

Coordination

Coordination is an essential element of any organization. The more complex the organization, the greater the problem of coordination. If there is included in one organizational unit all of the things which pertain to it or are so directly related as to be of major importance, we will

end up with all functions being in the office of the head of the organization. In defining the organization, overlappings are kept to a minimum, but to the extent that they occur or that actions in one area affect actions in another area, coordination must be provided. Persons in the line of responsibility are there for action. Staff personnel are advisory, informative and for oversight to see that policy is known and followed.

The staff usually deals with how something is done rather than what is done.

The principal objective of coordination is for everybody to pull together, each contributing to the common objective and at the proper time. This requires a good communication, good relationships and good planning. In an organization you go partly where you want to go and partly where the demands of the overall organization indicate that you should go.

Relationships

Relationships are of major importance in an organization. To avoid too great a strain on relationships, we need to avoid overorganization which complicates the coordination problem, places a strain on communication and results in poor relationships and ineffective action. To maintain proper relationships, objectives need to be fully understood and individual initiative within the overall objectives permitted or, better, encouraged. The question of relationships is determined to a considerable extent by the organization established, the clarity of the definition of functions, the delegation of responsibility, and the provision for effective overall coordination without dictation. To be fully effective an organization must have people with zeal and drive to move towards the established objectives. At the same time, it should have objective people who can properly evaluate the relationship problems involved and insert a word of caution at the proper time.

Maintenance of Organization

Maintenance of a logical and effective plan of organization is not a matter of chance or letting nature take its course. It requires continuous study, development, adjustment to changing conditions and continuous review to see that the plan is properly understood and working effectively. Full organization effectiveness requires understanding, close cooperation and intelligent application which can come only through systematic training of the entire executive and supervisory personnel.

Good administration can make a poor organization function even though not at full effectiveness. Poor administration can quickly wreck a good organization. We cannot afford to be satisfied with anything less than the best organization we can devise. It should be as simple as is consistent with getting the job done.

The greatest of all arts, it is said, is the ability to create circumstances which cause people to want to produce to the maximum of their capacity, not because they have to, but because they want to do so. This could well be our guide in establishing and maintaining organization and in the assumption and placing of responsibility.

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

AUG 15 1970

C & R-PREP.